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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
MONDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2006

In Today's Papers

Turkey Celebrates National Day

All papers report on celebrations for the 83rd anniversary of the foundation of the Republic of Turkey that took place around Turkey on Sunday. President Ahmet Necdet Sezer said at a reception held at the Presidential Cankaya Palace that his term in office witnessed the most difficult years for Turkey since the establishment of the Republic. "We should always be careful against threats targeting our democratic and secular Republic. Any weakness will make such conscious threats permanent. It is evident that some circles do not overlap with the image of modern Turkey. Religion is a holy fact that should never be used for political ends. Turkey has always been a modern country and will continue to be so," Sezer stressed. Mainstream papers and Cumhuriyet quote the Turkish General Staff (TGS) Chief General Yasar Buyukanit that "as a citizen of Turkey, I find President Sezer excellent. He defends all the values of the Republic," without elaborating further whether his remarks had anything to do with the ongoing debate over who will replace Sezer next year as the new president of Turkey. Buyukanit said it was not appropriate for the issue be turned into a polemic. Sabah quotes opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal as saying, "I hope Erdogan will not attempt to become the new president of Turkey. The problem is the militant mentality with which Erdogan is eyeing the post."

EU-Cyprus

Sabah, Hurriyet, Milliyet and weekend papers: Sabah reports that the EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn has criticized negative debates about Turkey's EU entry. Rehn said that the debates had weakened Turkish determination for reform and damaged the EU's credibility. Saturday's Zaman reported Rehn as saying that the Cyprus issue will "remain on the table until the EU's December summit meeting in Finland. The commission will update the report if needed." Rehn added that Turkey must fulfill its obligations towards Cyprus by the end of the year. Saturday's Radikal noted that the EU draft report contained references about an earlier EU declaration on the Cyprus issue. The declaration warns that talks

between Turkey and the EU could suffer if Turkey fails to meet its responsibilities in Cyprus. Milliyet reports that, commenting on the Finnish plan for solving the Cyprus issue, Prime Minister Erdogan said that "the plan is not reasonable and not different; nevertheless, we will consider the plan." Zaman covers the words of Greek-Cypriot leader Papadopoulos in an interview with Fileleftheros newspaper as saying that "to continue the negotiations, the least Turkey can do is return Varossa (Maras) to Greek Cypriots."

Turkey-Iraq Joint Economic Committee Meeting

Hurriyet reports that Turkey and Iraq will hold their 16th joint economic committee meeting. Reportedly, Iraq wants to bargain about the control of Euphrates and Tigris rivers and asked Turkey to add "water resources" to the agenda of discussions. However, last Friday the Foreign Trade Under secretariat rejected the Iraqi offer by saying that water resources were not linked to economic issues.

Editorial Commentary on Iraq

Washington-based Yasemin Congar argues in the mainstream Milliyet that the overall approach in Washington toward the future of Iraq is changing, pointing to the acceptance of a "loose federation" model: "There are both Democrats and Republicans who believe a more autonomous status in Iraq is needed for the Kurdish, Sunni and Shiite regions, and are seriously considering an agreement between the three regions on oil sharing. There is also a positive approach to the idea of US forces stationed in northern Iraq as well as providing special status to Kirkuk and Baghdad under a federal structure. The defenders of this plan also emphasize that the realization of these ideas require both an Iraq that does not serve as a base for the PKK and a modus vivendi between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan. Even the strong supporters of the current Iraq policy within the administration, such as Edelman, the Pentagon's number

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three, are keeping the door open for the possibility of redefining the federation for Iraq. The fact of the matter is that a 'loose federation' formula is becoming the most realistic plan in the debates for the future structure of Iraq. Now it remains to be seen if President Bush will also find himself closer to a realistic plan in the aftermath of the Congressional elections. Does Turkey have a plan in case Washington moves toward a policy change?"

Writing in the conservative Bugun, Nuh Gonultas notes the prospects of a US victory in Iraq are poor: "A back step from Washington on Iraq policy should not be expected due to the super-power's pride, yet the indications are leading to the conclusion that the US will be the loser in Iraq. All of this does not come as surprise if we remember the fact that this war was based on a series of lies. At this point we should feel sorry not only for Iraqis but also for the American people as long as Bush and the neo-cons remain in the power."

USS Eisenhower Hosts Turkish Guests

Sabah, Aksam and Zaman report US Ambassador in Turkey, Ross Wilson, invited a group of Turkish guests on board the USS Eisenhower over the weekend. Sabah says "The giant American aircraft carrier USS Eisenhower returned to the Mediterranean at a time of growing speculation regarding military operations against Iran. Zaman reports "USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, one of the largest aircraft carriers in the world, has returned to the Mediterranean after five years. The aircraft carrier had been sent to the region under debates in the US press on operations against Iran. Turkish guests on board had an opportunity to watch jetfighters taking off for operations.

TV News:

(NTV, 7.00 A.M.)

Domestic News

- The Turkish National Security Council (MGK) is to convene Tuesday to discuss the fundamentalist threat as its main agenda item.
- The Turkish Parliament will debate Tuesday the new bill on non-Muslim minority foundations. The ruling AKP government wants to

pass the bill before the release of the EU Commission's Turkey progress report on November 8 while the opposition CHP opposes it for being an "infringement of Lausanne Treaty".

- The Chief of Turkish General Staff General Yasar Buyukanit will pay an official visit to Greece on November 1-4.

International News

- Gunmen have abducted and killed 17 policemen near the southern Iraqi city of Basra.

- NATO and Afghan troops killed 55 suspected militants in Afghanistan, while a roadside bomb killed one NATO soldier and wounded eight others.

- The EU Commission's progress report to be released November 8 says Turkey had failed to meet short-term goals for EU accession.

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WILSON